BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Virginia McBride

"Well, they were starting English standard schools then, and we were getting more and more of them, and it was really going full speed ahead. We were making headway with the English language. Because if you were in a school where people spoke English, and they spoke it in and out of class, they were doing all right. And youngsters that were borderline were aware of it. So that I felt that the best service we did was for the borderline cases, because we pulled them into Roosevelt [High School], or we pulled them into the English standard."

Virginia McBride was born in Oregon in 1903. At the age of four, she moved with her family to Chicago, and three years later they settled permanently in Utah. McBride graduated from the University of Utah in 1924 and taught school in Utah for two years.

McBride came to Hawai'i in 1927 to teach at Hilo High School. After one year in Hilo, she moved to Honolulu and taught at Kalākaua Junior High School. In 1930 she began teaching English at Roosevelt High School, then an English standard school. During World War II, McBride left Roosevelt for a year and a half to work temporarily in the Office of Civil Defense. During her career as a teacher, she also spent three separate years on exchange to schools in California, Utah, and Connecticut.

In 1949 McBride moved from classroom teaching to administration and became principal of Moloka'i Elementary School for a year. She then worked as a principal for various schools on O'ahu, including Waikīkī Elementary School, Koko Head Elementary School, and Mānoa Elementary School. McBride retired in 1965.

Tape Nos. 21-7-1-91 and 21-8-1-91

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Virginia McBride (VM)

February 19, 1991

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Joe Rossi (JR)

JR: This is an interview with Virginia McBride, conducted February 19, 1991, in her Honolulu home. The interviewer is Joe Rossi.

VM: How far back do you want to go?

JR: Well, as far back as you care. I wanted to know at least about your parents, and maybe about your grandparents, too, if that's . . .

VM: (Both of my parents were born in Utah, but their backgrounds are very different. On my father's side, my grandmother was descended from the *Mayflower* pilgrims of 1620 and their struggle for existence in the New World. But it was more than a hundred years later that the Scottish McBrides arrived on the shores of New York and became involved in the American Revolution of 1776. Both families were pioneers, but did not become acquainted until they joined the Mormon church many years later and were driven westward, from one location to the next, beyond the boundaries of the United States. Both families were leaders when the Salt Lake area became headquarters for the church. The McBrides remained in Utah, as did most of the Lymans. But Amasa Mason Lyman became one of the leaders of a large group that continued to the Pacific. He was one of the founders of San Bernardino, California. Later he organized missionary groups in Europe, to bring converts to the Mormon church.

(At that time there were not many educated members of the church, and almost no doctors. In case of illness, the "laying on of hands" at prayer sometimes produced a cure. But prayer did not cure a toothache. Lyman's husky son was given a pair of forceps to pull aching teeth. From the time my father was a little boy, the family planned that he would be a well-trained dentist.

(He was enrolled in the Brigham Young University soon after it was organized—to study science, but also to study music, and play the piano. But before he graduated, he was called on a mission to Germany—for three years. He also saw Europe and mastered the German language.

(Then he returned to Utah, claimed his bride, and moved to Oregon to find a job as a schoolteacher.)

JR: You didn't mention your mother. What was her education and profession?

VM: (Her family history was very different from my father's. Her father was born in the fashionable resort city of Bath, England in 1837, and was highly trained as a cabinet maker. Bath had been founded long before by the Romans when they discovered natural hot springs in the vicinity. Mother's family, the Parratts, had lived in the area for several generations and knew the culture, the education, and the art. They had come to America as Mormon converts, but were surprised at the primitive conditions: salt water, prairies, rocky mountains, and far distances from city culture. Life was hard, and many of their relatives and friends died.

(Later, Grandfather was employed by an excellent furniture company, and was able to furnish his own home properly. He also bought books for his children, and took them to see materials imported and displayed in stores. The children were sent to school, and my mother—one of the younger ones—was enrolled in the newly-organized University of Utah and became a schoolteacher. She taught two years before marrying my father, and moving to Oregon. My brothers and I were all born in Oregon.)

JR: Do you mind telling me what year you were born?

VM: I was born in 1903.

JR: [In] 1903?

VM: Yes, I'm eighty-eight years old.

JR: You should be proud of that.

VM: I don't know (laughs) whether I'm proud of it or not, but that's the way it is.

JR: What were your interests as a youngster?

VM: (Life may have been hard for some people, but for me it was a delight. I remember swinging on the gate, and seeing a herd of huge animals being driven by, and my first circus parade, with big elephants, and going camping, by horseback as there were no roads.

(Bedding and food boxes were strapped to the sides of the horses, and I rode on top of one with my father. There was a fallen tree in our path, and Father looked back to make sure Mother's horse was all right. Mother was on top of a load of bundles, with her legs stretched out in front, and my baby brother in her arms. When her horse stumbled, she leaped off with the baby, and they were not hurt. But I have never forgotten.

(I remember the neighborhood kids, and my play house, and a huge Christmas tree, and a house full of visitors—including my grandparents from Tooele—and the birth of my second brother, at home, and my being allowed to hold him in my little rocking chair.

(Yes, the first years of my life were precious, but Father was still dreaming of going to dental school. He decided to give up teaching and go into real estate. But Mother had a better idea. She insisted that they go to Chicago, to Northwestern University. They could sell the interest

in their house, and she would help to find ways to earn money. And she finally won!

(With $700 and three children they set out by train for Chicago. We stopped in Utah to see our relatives, and again in Nebraska, to see an aunt and uncle. And I will never forget seeing my first automobile! It went—without a horse! Life was amazing!)

JR: Do you think that it was because of your parents—their influence—that you became a schoolteacher?

VM: Oh, well I don't know. In those days, if you went to college, if you were in the upper groups in college, you got into education. You had to be good to get into education, at that time. And the leading people went into education. It was not until after the labor unions came out and took over. . . . Now, you talk to any people you know who have daughters going to college. Ask them what the girls are studying. They'll tell you they're studying law, they're studying medicine, they may study architecture, they may study art. Are they studying teaching? No, no, no. You don't go to college four years to join the labor union. And that makes a difference in our school situation everywhere. We have some good people in education now, but we have a good many people in education who couldn't get into anything else. That's as I see it.

(I was four years old when we went to our first "flat" (apartment) in Chicago. It was not satisfactory—because of bedbugs—and we immediately went back to the hotel. When Father went to Northwestern to register, he met other men from Utah, all unhappy with their boarding houses because of heavy tobacco smoke and constant black coffee—all prohibited by the Mormon church. They envied my father because he had a wife to cook for him. This pleased my mother, and she immediately said they find a larger flat, and she would cook for the Utah men, and they could all study together.)

They had a big table (where) they used to study at nights—and they stood me up on that table, when I was four years old, and they taught me to recite what one of their professors had said. "The ontology of the individual is an epitome of the philology of the race." And they would laugh when I would say it because I was just a little kid. Well, I've never forgotten it. And so that was where my education began.

I went to kindergarten there, too. And when I was old enough to go in the first grade, six years old, my mother said, "No, she's not going into the first grade. She's going to stay in kindergarten." My mother had been a teacher, and she said, "The older children in any class are the leaders. And they are the ones that benefit most from the school. And she's not going to school until she's older than the others in the first grade."

JR: And they let her do that?

VM: That's why they kept me in kindergarten. Then we packed up and moved back to Utah when my father finished his dental course. And when we got there, they'd already closed school for the year. So I didn't go to school until that September. So I was one of the older ones in the class. And I don't know whether it developed leadership, it just made me bossy. (JR laughs.) But they pushed me ahead, so I caught up with my own pretty soon.

And then I had two brothers. One of them studied dentistry, and one of them is an ophthalmologist.

JR: Where do you fit in? Are you the youngest or the oldest?

VM: I was the oldest, yes. And so anytime (my mother) wasn't there, they were to do what I said. And they know that. Years later, one of my brothers was told he had to have a leg amputated. He had to go back to Mayo's [i.e., Mayo Clinic] for it. And his wife was a lovely little girl, but she was a country girl, and the thought of going to a big city—she didn't know anything. She was terrified. So I wrote to my brother June, and I said—June is a doctor, he is an ophthalmologist. He did an internship at Queen's Hospital incidentally. Well anyway, I said, "Bruce is going back to Mayo's to have a leg removed. I want you to go with him and be in the operating room when that leg is taken off. I want you to stay there and help his wife get through everything."

He wrote back, "My mother taught me when I was young that if she wasn't there I was to do what you said, so I'm going back to Mayo's." (Laughs) So he did. He's no longer living, but he was a good man. So I have one brother, the one who has only one leg, who's still living.

JR: Where does he live now?

VM: He lives in Salt Lake City, comes down here sometimes. I'm always glad to see him. He's very independent and gets along with his crutches beautifully. Almost as old as I am.

JR: Since both of your parents at one time or another taught school, were you taught a lot of things at home?

VM: Oh yes, I think so. You couldn't get away from it, especially if you had a mother like mine. [My father had] studied music [at Brigham Young University]. Incidentally, he was a wonderful musician. Some people wanted him to go into music rather than dentistry, but anyway. . . . (Music was important in our household. We had a family orchestra. Father played the flute as well as the piano. I had violin lessons when I was very young, and when I was on a program, Father played my accompaniment. One brother played the cornet, and the other the clarinet. We did many things as a unit.)

So I grew up, and my mother made sure that we had books, we had all kinds of things. My mother graduated from the University of Utah in the normal [i.e., teacher-training] course then. She did not get a degree, but . . .

JR: Was that a two-year or a four-year [course]?

VM: I think she only went (three) years. I'm not sure. But she had a brother who was also a professor, a teacher, and then he got to be superintendent of schools (in one Utah district). And he'd laugh---one time, he said, "I don't have a degree, but the classes I teach prepare other people for degrees." (Chuckles) No, he was very good. So I have a variety of relatives scattered all over the country.

JR: Was English your favorite subject as a student?

VM: Oh yes, I think so. I was going to be in English—my mother gave me the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam when I was very young. And as I said---I'll let you read this thing that [a former student] sent me the other day. And one of the things he has always done was have his students read the *Rubaiyat*. I must have started him on it, because I've always had my people interested in the *Rubaiyat*. That was a very interesting thing.

But I knew I was going to be an English teacher from the beginning. But I also took psychology. I have a minor in psychology, and that's very good, too.

JR: Was your program a four-year program or a five-year program?

VM: Mine was a four-year program. I graduated at the end of four years, and I started teaching school in Utah. And I taught there for two years, and then I came to Hawai'i. You couldn't come to Hawai'i until you had two years of experience. And I applied for Hawai'i.

And so then one day father brought me the mail. They didn't deliver it in our little town. But he brought the mail one Sunday morning. He got it out of the mailbox and brought it. (It was a notice that I had been assigned a position in Hilo High School, and was to return to answer by wireless, as follows: "Education, Hawai'i: Yes, McBride," or "No, McBride." My parents were going to Salt Lake, and Father agreed to send my acceptance. But when he returned he told me the message he sent was "No, McBride.")

So Mother said afterwards, "You didn't even ask me whether you could go." I didn't. I was afraid to.

(It was not till I came to Hawai'i that I went on for my master's degree. I took work at the University of Hawai'i, and also summer classes in Utah. And of course we were required to take special studies before becoming administrators in Hawai'i. At least that was so for many years.)

JR: What did you know about Hawai'i at that time, and why would you have wanted to come out here?

VM: When I was in college, we had students that had come from Hawai'i. And I had seen their magazine that they had from Hawai'i. It sounded very wonderful. And they certainly played beautiful music. Oh Lordy, those kids from Hawai'i used to play the guitar and the banjo and—not banjo, the ukulele [*'ukulele*]—and whatnot. So we got pretty well acquainted with some of them.

JR: You said that your mother—you hadn't told your mother.

VM: Well, I was afraid she'd say I couldn't go that far from home. She wanted me to go back East. Oh, she was sure that New England was the best place for people to be. She'd had some professors from the East, and she was very sure that my education wouldn't be complete until I had professors from the East.

JR: I wanted to ask you about your first teaching experiences in—first out of college. You taught in Utah for two years, right?

VM: I taught in Utah for two years. And the superintendents from all the schools used to come up to the university to pick out their teachers. You see, we didn't have as much—we didn't have TV and all the things you have now. But we'd be in the classroom, and we'd get a notice from the dean's office, "All history majors report to the dean's office at once."

"Okay."

"All phys ed majors report to the dean's office at once."

"Okay."

And so on. And not once did they say, "English majors report to the dean's office." When we [heard] that, they said, there'd be a superintendent there that was looking for teachers. And he would talk to them and pick out ones he wanted. Well, never once did anybody from my department get to go there. We weren't called.

And it came up to the end of the year, my father said, "You don't have to teach school. You can stay home with your mother."

"No." And I had been offered two junior high jobs, and I wouldn't take those. I was praying for high school, and I was going to have high school.

So I went home, and I didn't have a job. But I belonged to a hiking club, and we used to go back to Salt Lake to go hiking. And one Sunday, when I got back from hiking, there was a telephone call for me up in the place where I used to stay. There was a superintendent from Washington County—that's in the southern tip of Utah—who was looking for a teacher and somebody had recommended me. Great day in the morning! I borrowed some clothes from my roommate so I could go up. My clothes didn't fit too well. But I went up to see him, and he offered me a job in a town called Hurricane, a little, tiny town way down in southern Utah. But it was high school, so I signed it. And I went down there to teach school.

It was a little, tiny town, and there was no business in that town. They didn't have much money, very little money. They paid some sheepherders. There was no industry in that town of any kind. There was not a railroad there to tax. You had to take the---you'd go to Cedar City and then get halfway to St. George and get off. And then you wait until the mail wagon goes, and then you get a ride into Hurricane. Oh yes, they said Cain and Abel were once walking along together, and one turned and said, "Hurry, Cain." That's the way they named it Hurricane. (Laughs)

Well anyway, so I went there. We didn't have a---we had a high school, but they didn't have any senior class there. They had some junior classes, sophomores and juniors. But the school was in one large building. One end of it was for elementary school, and one end of it was for junior and senior high school. And most of the people there didn't have degrees. But I had one and the principal had a degree. So word got out that Miss McBride had a degree. Well, I did. And so anyway, I spent a year there. It was an interesting experience. It was far away from anything.

And then, because I was an experienced teacher, I got a job in my hometown. So I went to

my hometown to teach there, and I stayed at home with my parents. And that was a little town called Tooele. It was a smelting community there, as well as—Mormons had settled it first, and they had a lot of non-Mormons in there and so on. And it was a thriving community.

And there were two English teachers there at that time. I was one, and they had another gal brought in from Dakota somewhere to teach English. She was one year older than I. She'd had one year of experience—no, she'd had two years of experience. I'd had only one. And her salary was $300 a year more than mine. In those days, $300 a year was a lot of money. And so anyway, she got more salary than I did. She was supposed to teach seniors, and I was to teach juniors. I was to have juniors and freshmen, and she was to have sophomores and seniors. As soon as she got hers, she came in to ask me if I'd just as soon trade off. She didn't want seniors. Would I take the seniors and she'd have the juniors? Yes, I would. She said she didn't want to get 'em ready for college, and that's what you do have to do if you had seniors. Well, it's all right with me. But as soon as the superintendent found that out, he came down and told her she had to teach the seniors. Well, okay, she kept them. And at the end of that year she got married and left. And when I got the contract for next year, they had raised my salary fifty dollars. Not fifty dollars a month, but fifty dollars a year. So I said, "Well, phooey with that." So I sent the thing back to the head of the school board and said, "I'm very sorry, I won't be interested in coming back next year. Thank you just the same."

And then the superintendent called my father. "What's the matter with your daughter? Why does she. . . ."

And my father said, "Well, you'll have to talk with her. I don't know anything about it. She would know."

So he wanted me to come up there. I went up, and he said, "Why aren't you signing this contract?"

And I said, "Because you have a job here for a teacher who makes $300 a year more than I do, and if I'm not qualified for that, I'm not going to stay here. I'm not going to stay here and be a second one on the list. If I don't qualify for the best job, I should leave. You can have somebody else that you think will be good."

"Oh." And he said, "It's worth $300 a year for you to live at home."

"You're right, but it's no consideration of the school board." So I wouldn't sign it. And that's when I was offered this job up in Wyoming, and I had one for another place in southern Utah, not the little place, and one in Hawai'i! So I think that I did all right (when) I came to Hawai'i.

JR: Can I ask you how—what did a teacher make? What kind of salary would a teacher have made back then?

VM: Oh, I'd have to look back. It seemed to me that it was quite a lot of money. It was better than they got in Utah, but it certainly wasn't very much when you had to live on it in Hawai'i. (Laughs) I don't remember just what I got, but it wasn't (much).

JR: When you first started teaching in Utah, out of college, did you feel prepared? Were you ready for that first class?

VM: Oh yes. Oh yes, I was very sure I was. We had some very good professors at the University of Utah, wonderful people. And I had some very good psychology teachers there, and philosophy teachers. It was really an excellent school.

JR: What were your first impressions of Hawai'i when you came here?

VM: Oh, it was just beautiful. We were up---I got up that morning as we were sailing around to come in and saw all that green hills and the green mountains. I was surprised that there were so many mountains. But they were beautiful and green and they were lovely. Oh, I just thought that was marvelous. And then we went out---I went out to the beach, and we registered at the hotel out there. And I stayed out there for a week or ten days, I guess, before I went over to Hilo to teach. I checked in down here with the school board and then we—oh my, it was a marvelous place to live. And the coconuts were growing right on the trees, and they would fall down on you if you weren't too lucky.

It was marvelous, and the place was full of teachers. Waikīkī, they called that Flappers' Acre because there were so many teachers living there at the time. You see, it was a small community, not like this. We were way off. And we had not the contact you have now. We couldn't telephone across the ocean in those days. You could send a wireless if you wanted, but that's all. And you didn't get mail until the boat came in. There was no mail except on Boat Day. Then it would come in. And on Boat Day, everybody went down to see the boat, whether you knew anybody on it or not. You went down to see the boat. They had the band down there playing, and they had hula dancers down there. You didn't want to miss anything like that.

JR: How often did the boat come in? Once a month, once a week?

VM: Oh, it usually came in about maybe once a week, or once in ten days or so. The Los Angeles line, and then there were people from up in Vancouver, too, that came in. So we had a variety of boats. But they didn't come regularly, but every once in a while they got in. It was wonderful.

JR: You mentioned Flappers' Acre . . .

VM: That's what they called Waikīkī at that time, because there was lots of teachers living there.

JR: Were these teachers from different parts of the country that were living . . .

VM: Yes, yes. You see, Hawai'i did not train teachers at that time. The University of Hawai'i did not train teachers. And all the teachers that came, came from away, except—the ones in the elementary school were trained here, but they had very little training, and they were not really as qualified as they should have been. But the teachers came from everywhere. I went over to Hilo to teach school. I was the only one from Utah. They just came from everywhere. It was an education just to meet the people that came from all the different places. It was fabulous and, oh, you found out lots of things. People were different. If you grew up in Utah,

you knew what was right and what was wrong, and you knew how to behave yourself properly. And I saw a girl sit on the floor in a room, and she took a whole glass of *'ōkolehao* and drank it down. *'Ōkolehao* was the locally made liquor then. I was shocked beyond words.

JR: This was a classroom?

VM: No, this just was a bunch of people out having fun afterwards. Teachers got invited all kinds of places. Everybody invited teachers. And the teachers that came from all over. . . . We weren't all from the same place. I went to stay at a boarding house. The principal at the---I checked in up at the high school, and he told me Sternemann's Boarding House would be a good place for me to live. I didn't know where I was going to live. I had to find a place. So I went to Sternemann's Boarding House, and they had rooms, and they had rented to people there. And it was several days before school started, and I was killing time and sitting on the front porch, reading my magazine like a proper lady. And I walked downtown, and they had booths where people were selling fruit. And the bananas looked fantastic, you know. So I told the man, "I'd like three bananas, please."

He picked up a thing this big [bunch]. He said, "Ten cents." So I bought the whole thing for ten cents and had to get people to help me eat it.

(Telephone rings.)

VM: Excuse me, I have to answer the telephone.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JR: When I spoke to you earlier, before this interview, you said that the teachers that decided to come out here had to have a lot of spunk, and that made good leaders.

VM: We had tremendously good people. You had to have a lot of courage to come. You were far away. My friends thought I was crazy to go out to that—why, they'd never heard of this place. It was far away, you see. And the boats came through occasionally, but there was no airplanes. They had had one or two planes come down that got banged up somewhere.

And so I came down here. And during that first week or so I was here, somebody on the Mainland had started a contest for a whole bunch of fliers to have a race to Hawai'i. And anybody could join, it seemed, that wanted. I don't know, they went from somewhere in the Northwest somewhere, and they were to come to Hawai'i. And there were two prizes, one for the first prize, and one for the second prize. I think $25,000 and $10,000, if I remember right, something like that. And everybody was excited because there was going to be planes come in here. They weren't used to planes.

So a whole bunch of us were staying at the beach, and we got a car and went out to the country. They were supposed to come in out by Wahiawā, somewhere out that area, a military field, I guess it was. I don't know. And we went out there. Everybody went out early, and the people in all the cars were singing songs and playing ukuleles [*'ukuleles*]. I'll tell you, this was a wonderful place. There was music everywhere, all the time. It was a delightful place. But we sat there and waited and waited. And it was dark and—so then pretty

soon there was no sign of anybody coming in, so we went out and had breakfast over in the next town someplace and came back out there. And everybody was waiting for the planes.

And finally one plane came in, and the people all rushed out to meet it. And they were so glad that plane came in. I've forgotten the name of the man who won the race now, but anyway, he made it. And that was wonderful. And then we were waiting to see if some more planes came in. And it was quite a while before the second plane came in. And it had had trouble. It had flown down past the islands. You see, there was no way of knowing where they were, and there was no communication between planes after they left the land until they got down here. There was no way to talk to them. This plane had got lost. There was two people in it. And they had decided they had overflown the island, and so they turned around to come back. And they were running out of gasoline, and one man was on the floor pumping gas in the engine with his mouth to get it here. And it landed. So we were out there when it came. Some woman had been out there expecting her husband to come in, and he hadn't come. She wanted him to come in first, and he didn't make it until the second. She rushed out to meet him. She said, "Where the hell have you been? You've only made the second one!" The others didn't come at all. They were all lost at sea. None of the others came. There was one man down there who had outfitted a plane and brought it, and a woman had been trained to fly it. I've forgotten her name now—Mildred Duran. He had thought she would be there. We had met him, and he was staying at the hotel down near there. And the plane never came in.

JR: Never came in.

VM: None of them ever came. And with the next ship that left, people sent loads of leis down, and the ship went halfway across the ocean and then put all the leis out in memory of the people that were lost at sea. There was never any way to find out how many of them had—how far they came or who was ahead, anything about it. They were just lost.

JR: When you came initially, did the Department of Education have a liaison or someone that met you and showed you where Waikīkī was and . . .

VM: We all knew---they had told us where to report. There was an office Downtown. And I don't think anybody met the ship. I had told somebody—I don't know. And we met people on the ship that were coming. So some of us went out to the beach, and we had, I guess—I don't know how I knew, but I knew which hotel I was going to stay in. Somebody had told us, made a suggestion or something. So we stayed there. And then we stayed at a little place, then wanted to be transferred to another. And it was wonderful, a beautiful place there.

JR: How did teaching in Hilo compare to teaching in Utah?

VM: There's no comparison. There's no comparison, nothing. You see, most of the people in our school [Hilo High] were children of workers that had come here to work here in the fields. And when we went over to Hilo, on the way the ship stopped over in Maui somewhere. And they loaded a whole bunch of these kids that had been working in the fields, in the cane fields. They came and got on the ship. We saw them getting on, but they were all—they didn't stay in staterooms like us, they were all staying down below in something. But we knew that they were workers.

And then when school started, we had—most of the people were Japanese. I was given a list of the children that were going to be in my room. I couldn't say their names. They were Japanese names. But there was one name I could say, Francis Lyman. My great-grandfather was named Francis Lyman. And there was one [student] named Francis Lyman. Wonderful. And there was one other I thought I could say. It sounded like a perfectly good *Haole* name. It turned out to be it was a Korean name, it was not *Haole* at all. And when Francis Lyman appeared, he was a great, big Hawaiian football player. He didn't look anything like my relative. (JR laughs.)

You see, the Lyman family---my Lymans left New England with the Mormons to go west. And (Amasa Mason Lyman) was one of the leaders. He was one that eventually founded San Bernadino. But there were other Lymans there. That Lyman family was a big one. I don't think they had got acquainted with each other, because they'd lived there for a hundred years or so. And there was a group that went down around the [Cape] Horn and came out to Hawai'i as missionaries at the same year that (my) people went with the Mormons. That's a good many years before I came down here. But the Lymans that came out here—I have a book on that family somewhere—they sent most of their children back to New England for education. But one of them married a local girl here. I say local, she wasn't (*Haole*) at all. I don't know what all she was, but she was not *Haole*. And they had quite a family, a large group. And they lived over in Hilo. And if you go to Hilo now, there is a museum over there that's the Lyman [House Memorial] Museum. And all of those people were descended of the same people that mine were descended from.

And this Francis Lyman over there was a football player. He was a handsome kid when he came in. His name was Francis Lyman. I could say it. I couldn't say those [other] names. And I had all these classes, many classes. And I passed a paper around, "You sign this. I'll check them with the roll later on."

So I could read them, but—and then while I was teaching, somebody from the office came up and said, "Is Kimiyo Kohashi here?"

(Laughter)

VM: "I don't know."

"Will you ask?"

"No, you may ask."

"Kimiyo Kohashi."

And a pretty little girl got up, and I thought, my goodness, she has a name like Kimiyo Kohashi. Well, I learned her name anyway. Oh, I learned all of them, but it was a little bit difficult.

There were some *Haole*s there. There was one *Haole* family, a very prominent family. They had sent their children up to a boarding school in San Francisco somewhere, two nice little boys. And the man that was in charge had written back and said, "The children are dying of

homesickness. They don't belong here. We suggest you take them back to Hawai'i." And some people hired tutors for their children. But this one little boy was in our class in Hilo High School—and I guess he was a freshman that year, I don't know—but a little Japanese girl sat next to him, and she helped him through English all the year. She was good. He was a timid little boy. Later on he became an artist, and he was well known here. He's no longer living, but his work is down at the [Honolulu] Academy of Arts. He was well known.

JR: Let me just take a break. I need to turn the tape over, okay?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JR: You were going to tell me about your administrators.

VM: Yes. (Dick Meyer was the principal of) Hilo High School. But he had started out to be an engineer or something. He was a scientist, and then he had gotten hold of a book on education and become fascinated with it, went back to school, and he came out here as an educator. The people that were running our schools, the educators, had come from different places. Now, Tom Vance was the principal of the junior high school over there that year. I was up at the high school, but we got acquainted with all the teachers everywhere, the junior high school and the senior high school. We were invited on picnics and tours with all these people from everywhere. And I was the only one from Utah. As I told you first, when I stayed at this boarding house waiting for school to start, reading my magazine as a proper schoolteacher should do, there were two men that stayed there. They had an old automobile, (and) were running around and kidding each other. One would say, "Have you got a date with Our Girl tonight, or is there a chance for me?"

And (his reply), "Well, I've got a date with her tonight, but you can have her tomorrow night, if you want."

They were dashing around getting some picnic stuff to put in the car, and one of them stopped and said to me, "Mac, why don't you come with us?"

And I said, "Nobody has asked me."

"Well," he said, "I'm asking you now. Will you come?"

"Yes, I will go."

(Then he turned to his companion: "You call Our Girl and tell her we're taking *wahines* on a picnic. We'll pick her up in half an hour." We stopped for her at the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association]. She was younger than I, and wore a simple cotton dress, with a full skirt, so that every time she leaned over, we could see her bloomers. She was from Iowa, with only two years of college training, but was employed to teach music at Hilo Junior High School. We were all very friendly and enjoyed the picnic.)

And then it wasn't too long—she stayed at the YWCA, but they closed that up. So she came up and got a room in the place where I lived. And then we stayed there for a while. And then somebody was building a little place that had some apartments, and so we rented an apartment, we moved in. People told me not to go with her, that we'd never get along. They told her that, too. But we moved in, and we stayed there the rest of the year. That was quite an interesting year. (And even today, we are good friends.)

Then Tom Vance was principal of the junior high school, and she was in his school. Then, at the end of that year, they didn't hire any high school teachers for Honolulu—McKinley was the only high school they had then—because they were putting all the ninth grades—the freshman class—out of the high school into junior high school. And so they were opening Kalākaua Junior High School. It was a big school. Well, I couldn't get transferred to a high school. And in fact, I applied for one. I came over and talked with people up at Kam[ehameha] Schools. And some woman up there told me that she'd thought I would be very good in her school because, she says, "You've had Hawaiians, you know what they're like." Well, I didn't like her attitude about Hawaiians, so I didn't follow through with that. I went up to—oh, what's a big school over here?

JR: Punahou [School]?

VM: Punahou. I went to Punahou, and they had a junior high job. I talked with them, and I decided I wasn't going after junior high. But they asked me if I knew somebody—they gave the name of somebody from Utah, and they asked me if I knew her. I said, "Yes, her father was head of our English department." And she had applied for school, so they gave her the job. And so I used to see her after that for a while. She was only here for a year or two, then she went back.

Tom Vance said I could get into junior high school at Kalākaua if I wanted to go there, so we went to Kalākaua. So I stayed there for a time, and . . .

JR: Can I interrupt for a sec? I just wanted to ask you a few more questions about Hilo, if I could, and then we'll come back to Honolulu. I asked you about the similarities between Utah and Hilo, and you said there were no similarities.

VM: You see, we were not too far from the volcano. And we used to ride up there. We knew people that went up there. In fact, we were in a car that ran off the road and tipped over once. But I was talking to our youngsters in the school—and of course, most of them didn't travel much, they were children from workers—and I asked them if they had ever been up to the volcano. And one said, "I been stay go. I been stay go." I have been there, I stayed there, and I left. I been stay go. That was the kind of pidgin they used, and we got acquainted with it there. We used to go up there---oh, we had a wonderful time going up there. When one of the volcanoes was active, it had hot lava down there. We used to go up to stand and watch it. And we used to teach school, but we also did a lot of other things. We were getting around and having an awfully good time over there.

JR: How did you adjust as a teacher to such varying circumstances?

VM: The first time I taught school up in Hilo, I went up there, and all the kids were coming up

there. I had seen the room I was going to have. It had windows that looked clear out over the bay, the most beautiful scenery I ever saw. And I thought, "Oh dear, I'll have to put some curtains up there to keep the kids interested inside."

The kids lined up that day to come into school, and they all walked right in like that and turned in and sat down. And they didn't talk. They were perfect. And so that's when somebody came and said, "Is Kimiyo Kohashi here?"

"I don't know. I don't know."

And the children were utterly perfect in discipline. There was never any question about it. And the principal in Hilo High School, Dick Meyer, as I told you, he was a wonderful leader. And he realized that the training that we had for teaching wasn't quite what these youngsters needed. And, for instance, they had a list of books the children were to read to make book reports. And you could select anything on the list and make a report on it. Well, the materials they had would be the kind of things that kids on the Mainland would read, and these were Japanese youngsters, mostly. The kids had no background at all for it. So Dick Meyer and I talked it over, and we said that the literature we had wasn't really what these youngster needed. So we ordered the—oh, this book, this magazine that comes every Saturday—*Saturday Review?* What am I trying to say? A magazine that comes once a month, once a week, and it used to cost five cents a copy.

JR: It's not the *Saturday Evening Post*, is it?

VM: *Saturday Evening Post*. We ordered *Saturday Evening Post* for my class. And we had a stack of these books. And these kids could borrow them and take them home. Now, they had nothing at home comparable in that. They came from Japanese homes, where the people spoke Japanese. These kids were learning, and they learned from those magazines. Well, I took down the list of books for book reviews and told them that they could read anything they wanted.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

VM: I told the students they were to report to me everything they read, whatever it was. Report everything, and you don't have to follow this book list. But keep on reading. Don't just quit reading. I want you to read. And you can read any magazine or any newspaper, anything you want, just so you report to me everything you read. Oh, they thought that was going to be wonderful, and it started out very well. And after a few weeks, they came and said could they have that list back at the board because they'd like to try read some of those books, too. So it went back. And I had other students in that school that were with teachers more sedate and old-fashioned than I was. And some of their children wanted to transfer to my class because they wanted to read everything. It worked out, you see. It was very good. There was never any discipline problem in that school, never any kind.

And at the end of the school year, the principal was being moved over to Maui for something else. He was going to be—an advanced job. And I'll never forget the farewell that we had for him in the auditorium. The kids sat there and cried and cried and cried because he was leaving. So he was up on the stage, and pretty soon he started to cry too, so everybody was

weeping tears.

Also, during that year, the faculty there—we were a wonderful group of people. We had come from different places. Oh, one woman said she couldn't stay more than a year because she couldn't afford to be away from Omaha for more than one year. But I noticed she'd stayed. I remember one time the faculty put on a play. I don't know how we got hold of the play, but we put on a play. It was a kind of a comedy to entertain the kids, because the kids weren't far enough along so they could take part in plays themselves. But it gave the teachers an idea to talk from. The children were just wonderful to work with.

JR: Was there anything like a PTA [Parent-Teacher Association]?

VM: Not there. But after we came to Honolulu, out at Kalākaua, Tom Vance was in charge there, and he had children coming there that were from foreign backgrounds. And Tom was smart enough to start a number of PTAs. He started a Japanese PTA, and a Chinese PTA, and a Hawaiian PTA, so they could come speaking their own languages. And it worked out fine. The people were delighted to come. And then after we got them there, then finally he was able to join them, put them all together, so that they worked together. And the PTA then, it was parents from all different groups, and it was wonderful.

But one horrible thing happened that year, too. That [Kalākaua] was a junior high school. They started junior high schools. And we had people in the ninth grade who had been out of school for two or three years. They quit at the eighth grade because it was too far to go down to McKinley [High School], the ninth grade. And so then they came back to school, so that in our ninth grade we had some that had been out of school for two or three years, but they were coming back. It was a huge school, and we had a wonderful group of people. But some confounded person in Hawai'i, or some group of people—you see, the *Haole*s that came in here, that were running the sugar industry and other things, didn't have the feeling for the immigrants that we had. We were working with them. And somebody got a [legislative] bill through—and it was passed here—that when children finished [junior] high school the principal of the school was to recommend which ones could go on to the ninth grade, into the senior high school, and which ones were through. Their education was finished when they got through the ninth grade at junior high school. They said, "That's high school education. They don't have to have more than a high school education, and that's high school."

That's when we changed the name of those schools to intermediate school, and we immediately had intermediate schools. But when the end of that year came, one teacher was away, and the youngsters that I had had before came in crying because they couldn't go to high school. They were through school. The principal had been able to recommend only a certain percentage to go on, and he was unhappy about it. Tom was furious about it. And he picked out some Hawaiian kids—they weren't necessarily our best students, but he said, "Those kids are going to be leaders in this community, and I can't stop them. And so they're going to have that. They'll be in on the list to go to high school." And he did send some of them. Well anyway, that's the way that went through.

And then we had election. And then, you didn't turn on your radio to hear the arguments, you had to go and stand around and watch them come. People came, the candidates would go to this place, and then they'd go to this place and this place, so that we had a whole string of

them. And I went with a bunch of people down at the beach way, way over to this school down on King Street, that was one place where they were having their speeches. And when anybody that got up to talk—we'd talk to all the kids around there. "You going to vote for him? You going to vote for him?" So on and so on and so on.

And when they put one up, the man that put this darn thing through saying that only a percentage of kids could go to high school, that the principal had to indicate which ones could not go on—he wanted them to go back and work in the cane fields. That's what they wanted. They were trying to guarantee that we would have workers in the cane field. Well, when he got up and made a speech, I told them all, "Don't vote for him. Don't vote for him. He is a bad man. He doesn't want our children educated. Vote against him." And I made a big speech. Well anyway, I talked to them. Sometimes I didn't know about all of them, but that man, "Don't vote for him. He's not letting our kids go to school. We want our kids to go to school."

And a day or two later, Tom Vance, who was our principal, had invited me and Naoma—that was Our Girl, the one that I had met in Hilo. We were really together by then. And they invited her and me to their house for dinner. And when we got there, I met Oren Long and his wife. He was a deputy superintendent at that time. I knew the name, but I hadn't met him. "Oh," he said, "you're Virginia McBride."

I said, "Yes, I am."

And he said, "I have a message for you." He said, "The superintendent has been hearing things, and the people came up to complain that the teachers were out trying to influence the vote. And I have been told to tell you that you're not to tell people how to vote, and you are to just let them do their own voting. And you're not to try to make up their minds for them."

Well, I was getting madder than hell. And he said, "Now, I made the speech. I told you what I was told to tell you. Now, I'll speak for myself. I want you to keep right on talking and do everything you can and make sure that man is out." So that was fine, you see. So ever after that I knew Oren Long. Later on he got to be our superintendent, of course, and finally got to be the governor and whatnot. He was a wonderful man. But we finally got that thing out, so that the kids could go on to school. But it was a very trying day when they couldn't go and they were out.

JR: Your first year at Kalākaua was the first year that that rule . . .

VM: No, it was the second, because that . . .

JR: Second year.

VM: It was the second year. You see, I went to Hilo in '27, then I went to Kalākaua in '28, and this was in '29 and '30. Because the kids that I had taught the year before all rushed in to tell me they couldn't go to school. And they were the ones that I'd had last year, and I wanted them to go to school. They couldn't go. I talked to them then. I tried to tell them, "You tell your mothers to send you to a private school, send you to a Catholic school, some other school for a year, and then you can transfer into high school." I don't know whether any of

them did that or not, but that was. . . .

JR: So it was almost like a quota on the number of . . .

VM: Yes. Yes, it was. That's what it amounted to. I don't know what the percentage was. I don't know. But there had to be a certain group that couldn't go on.

JR: Do you remember how long it was before that was changed?

VM: They changed it right quick, because the man did not get elected.

JR: Oh, they did.

VM: He got out, and so they changed that. So I felt that I had made the right speech.

JR: How was teaching in the city, at Kalākaua, different from Hilo for you?

VM: Well, it was very different, because in Hilo the children had all been out in the plantations and been working there and had very little other (tape inaudible). But when you got to Kalākaua, you had a lot of youngsters that—you had a lot of Hawaiian people, you had mixed blood, a lot of different ones, and you had Portuguese and all kinds. And they had been in the town, and they'd been going to movies, and they'd been going to the parks, and they had been getting around, so that there was a different setup entirely by the time we got to get back in town. There was a different thing.

JR: And how long were you at Kalākaua?

VM: I was there for two years. Not that I wanted to be, because, you see, that was a junior high school, and I wanted to teach high school. And at the end of that first year, I applied for a job at McKinley. And I went up to see the principal at McKinley. I went to McKinley, and I talked with him in his office. He knew who I was and what I did, and so on and so on. And I hoped I'd made an impression. Then I went outside and stood waiting for my bus to come to take me home—streetcar it was—and he came out and stood in the same place waiting for his streetcar, and he didn't remember ever seeing me before, though we'd been talking to each other only half an hour before. And when the assignments came out, another teacher at Kalākaua got the job that I had applied for. She had applied, too, and she got it. And I felt she wasn't so hot. I thought she was—to think that he took her when he could have had me. That was terrible. I was fussing. I told Tom [Vance], and Tom said, "Well, you know it's because she's had more experience. He had to put her in because she's had more experience than you have. You're just starting out."

I said, "But he could look at us and know that I was a better teacher than she was."

So I didn't get that job. And so then the following year, they opened Roosevelt High School. And it was the first English standard high school, and the only one, by the way. And it was going to be in some old, tumble-down buildings. And it was a small school. But I was one of the first teachers they appointed to it. So I was very pleased that I got that school. Well, that was a very good school, too. And it was---Clyde Crawford was the principal there. We were

there for two years, and then they built the new building and so on. And do you know what? The day came when the principal of McKinley [High] School got word to me and asked if I would come to McKinley. And I said, "No thank you, I'm staying at Roosevelt."

And then he got word to the principal [i.e., Crawford]. The principal called me down into the office and said, "You know"—oh, what's his name? I should know it.

JR: At McKinley? Cary.

VM: Yes, Miles Cary. "Miles Cary wants you assigned to his staff for next year."

And I said, "No, I'm not going there." I said, "He had his chance to take me, and he took somebody else. And I am not going."

And then Clyde said, "Well, if it makes any difference to you, I will not be here next year. They're going to have a new principal here."

I said, "I don't care what happens. I'm not going to Miles Cary's school." And I didn't go, I stayed where I was. And so I stayed there. Then, of course, we went on, and pretty soon we—oh, well, Roosevelt grew like anything, boom-boom. The parents were so glad to get an English standard school.

JR: What was that like, exactly?

VM: You had to know English to come. They kept out the kids that knew pidgin.

JR: Did they have a written test, an oral test?

VM: Oh, we had a whole group of tests. We had written and oral tests. We met children that wanted to come, and we talked with them, and we decided whether they should go or not. We had a whole list of things that would put them out. And sometimes you'd talk to them in the hall, and they would burst into pidgin. And so they didn't get in. It was an English standard school. And we did have youngsters whose English wasn't too good, but it was a wonderful thing for them. And then later on, when---as time went on, we had people [who] didn't want it to be there. Oh, there was a big wave in this community. You see, we had our new school—it was up here—and by that time, we had a new principal, and we had a huge football team that was doing fine. And all the kids at Punahou and the kids at Roosevelt—our kids called them "Pyunahou, Pyunahou." And we had—what was it? We had green and yellow. Green and gold were our colors there. We had to change them later because someone out in the country had green and gold. But ours were green and gold. So they [i.e., Punahou students] said, "Oh, we were green with a yellow streak in us." But our boys had girlfriends there, and they got back and forth. But they were very great rivals for each other.

JR: How could a student who didn't have English skills that were that good get into Roosevelt?

VM: They didn't get in. They couldn't. It was an English standard school, and they couldn't get in. Now, some of our youngsters were not super, were not perfect. We did have some. And the children that benefitted most were the non-*Haoles*, as I see it. Because---well, for instance,

one little girl came, she got into Roosevelt. And I used to tell the children, "It's time for grades to go on your report cards. You write me a letter, now, telling me what grade you should have on your report card. I won't guarantee to give you what you ask for, but I'll read what you say first." This was a good English assignment, you see. "And you tell me. You've got your notebooks, you've seen all the papers you've turned in, and you analyze it and tell me what you should have."

And I got one from one little girl, a Japanese girl, and she said, "Miss McBride, I hope you will give me a C. I've never had a C in my life. I've always had A's and B's. But a C at Roosevelt is better than an A at McKinley, because I can talk English all day here and nobody makes fun of me. When I was at McKinley, we talked English in the classroom, but when we went out everybody made fun of you if you tried to talk English then." She said, "Now I can talk English in and out of school and nobody makes fun of me. I will be very happy if you give me a C." And then, of course, I gave her a B, so she had room to improve.

We had one youngster from Punahou who came to take the test, and I flunked him flat. I don't know how he got into Punahou in the first place, and I could see why they kicked him out, because he didn't know anything.

And we had teachers that wanted to be at Roosevelt. It was a well-known school. But their English wasn't good enough, so they couldn't get in. They spoke pidgin. And some teachers did speak pidgin. Well, they were starting English standard schools then, and we were getting more and more of them, and it was really going full speed ahead. We were making headway with the English language. Because if you were in a school where people spoke English, and they spoke it in and out of class, they were doing all right. And youngsters that were borderline were aware of it. So that I felt that the best service we did was for the borderline cases, because we pulled them into Roosevelt, or we pulled them into the English standard. Now, we had kids there—in our school—that came from English-speaking homes, and they knew pidgin, too. But they knew enough to speak English. But you know, when they went off to college, they got into their fraternities by putting on pidgin-English programs. They were good at it. And some of our kids wrote books later on pidgin English and how it should be.

JR: What was the makeup of the school? I'm curious, was it predominantly *Haole* at that time?

VM: I don't think it was predominantly *Haole*. We had a lot of different ones. I brought these things in for you to look at. This is . . .

JR: That's what, a yearbook?

VM: Yes, this is a yearbook. Well, you can look at some of these pictures here. And they have. . . . Now, these are kids that came back later on. You see these kids there, they came back after they were out of school. Now, this is a *Haole* kid, this is a Japanese kid, there's McBride, this is a Chinese boy, and this is a Hawaiian girl. Now, that's a typical group for our school. And we had all kinds of people in there. Now there, see, those two were very good friends. That was a Japanese boy and a Chinese boy. They were very good.

JR: What about the faculty?

VM: The faculty were mostly *Haoles*. Well, we had one or two local people here, but nearly all *Haoles*. But in those days, they didn't train teachers here. [The Territorial Normal and Training School trained elementary teachers prior to 1931, when it became part of the University of Hawai'i.] You see, the university wasn't training. They had trained for elementary schools. But when you got to junior and senior high school, you didn't have—nearly all were *Haoles*. Later on, after the university began turning out teachers, then they had local people, too. We had some local people that wanted to come to Roosevelt, but their English was not good enough, so they didn't get in.

JR: As you mentioned, there was a test, a verbal—I mean a written and oral . . .

VM: Yes, yes.

JR: I'm curious to know what kind of things that you might have asked?

VM: Well, one of the things you did with it was to give a child something he could write about. And he could write it, then you'd ask him to read it to you. And if he spoke pidgin when he read it, and it wasn't right, you could get it. And then we also had a list of—we had one girl at Kalākaua, she made up a list of sentences for them to read to her. And they were sentences with words that were normally in pidgin that they got all mixed up in. She had really catchy words. They were the ones that were typical pidgin English. And if they read those, then they'd hang themselves for it, like the kid that said, "I been stay go." So we had quite a lot of it.

Then they extended the schools, and they were putting in more. But finally it got to the point, some of the teachers were very angry because they wanted to be at Roosevelt, and their English wasn't good enough, and they couldn't get there. And then we had parents that wanted their kids at Roosevelt, and the parents couldn't speak English either. And the kids were not really good. You give them something to read, and they'd get all tangled up in the words. But they were making more and more English standard schools, and it was catching on. They were doing all right. They were on their way to straightening out the schools.

Up at Ma'ema'e [Elementary School] one year—that's the area where they had pretty good English—they decided to make that an English standard school. And so the people that spoke English were to remain, and the kids that spoke only pidgin were told to go to another school. Well, their parents didn't like that, and they came down to picket the school when it opened. And the parents whose kids were in [the English standard school] took no sides. They didn't say anything about it, so that it was kind of a not-too-bad thing. And at that time, the superintendent of schools said, "I will not try to put in another standard school if the parents are opposed to it and don't want it. If it's just making trouble, and they're not—you'd think that the parents of the children who were there would be glad that it was a standard school, that their children were to have standard basis now. But if they don't appreciate it, then we can put it down." So they did away with it.

JR: Yeah.

VM: But they have this English First program on the Mainland now. I hope that catches on. It's a similar thing.

JR: Did you have to answer any of the critics yourself? You know, parents or . . .

VM: Oh, sometimes, yes. Sometimes they would fuss. And they would send kids up to take the test, and sometimes the parents would wait outside. The kid would go out, "No can, no can, no can." And that meant he failed. I believe quite a few failed, but we had plenty in there. And some of the ones that failed were so shocked that they really went out and started learning English.

JR: So it almost motivated . . .

VM: One of them, I think, was named Inouye, who is now back in Washington [U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye]. He went to a meeting a while ago, and a boy that had been at Roosevelt, that was doing international work there [in Washington, D.C.], was there too. And afterwards he went up and spoke to Inouye, saying, "I came from Hawai'i, too."

"Fine. Where did you go to high school."

He said, "I went to Roosevelt."

"They turned me down." I don't know whether they ever turned him down or not, but he was anti-Roosevelt anyway.

JR: What would you say to someone who criticized the English standard schools for being elitist or segregating or things like this?

VM: I'd say, "You don't know. Come out and see our children. You look at them." They say it's a *Haole* school. I say it's not *Haole*. The ones that benefit most are the ones whose English—who can speak English and not be criticized for it. And it becomes natural to them. It does more good for the borderline cases than for all the others. The ones that speak English anyhow, the *Haole* kids, they know pidgin too, but they can speak English. That's right. I don't care how much pidgin they know if they can speak English, too. But the ones that really benefitted are the borderline cases, the kids that suddenly are in a place where they can speak English all day. That makes all the difference in the world.

JR: And you stayed up at Kalākaua—you were there through the war [i.e., World War II], right?

VM: I stayed at Kalākaua . . .

JR: I mean Roosevelt.

VM: . . . until I started Roosevelt. And they started Roosevelt in nineteen. . . .

JR: Nineteen-thirty.

VM: Nineteen-thirty. And then we went up to the new building when they started it [in 1932], and I was there. And then they got to the point where they started training teachers here, at the university. They were training them there, and so they were putting in our local teachers in the school system. That's only right. But they didn't take people from the Mainland if there

was a local person available. And so it got to the point where nearly all of our teachers were locally trained. And they didn't come from a variety of schools, they were just all from the University of Hawai'i as it were. And Oren Long was concerned about that, and he felt that they should have a chance to have some contact other than in this one school. We were pretty well isolated here. So he started this exchange program. And teachers in our school could get an exchange job somewhere else for a year. They would trade them off for a year. And the ones in our school who went back to different places for a year really kept their eyes opened, and it benefitted them tremendously.

And then, of course, I went on exchange three different times. I don't think I needed it, but they had people wanting to come here. By that time, Hawai'i was getting very popular. And then people wanted to come, so they would exchange. I was an exchange to Hartford, Connecticut one year. And that was interesting since my family had helped to establish that community. And then one year I went to San Jose, California. And another year I went back to my hometown, because I wanted to go back—my mother was ill. And so a teacher there was glad to be an exchange teacher. So three times I went exchanging.

And then during the war, of course, I was down at OCD [Office of Civilian Defense]. During the war---our people in education were not like the ones today. They were not just teachers. Nowadays your union teachers will say, "We do this and this and this, and we don't do that and that. We do this." But when the war came along, we had people in our schools who were leaders. And they took one of our men and put him in charge of liquor, the handling of liquor throughout Hawai'i. They put another one in charge of rents, because rents were skyrocketing. Anyway, they put us in different jobs. And they got the bill through before the war started as to what they would do in case of war. I guess they were a little bit concerned. So they had the entire population enumerated and fingerprinted. So I went down to the Division of Registration, and I was there for over a year. I was with a group that registered people and then fingerprinted them. And then we kept that office open. And everybody had to have---you couldn't get around anywhere in Hawai'i without an identification card from our department. And all of our people were fingerprinted, and the fingerprints were analyzed. And they picked up a lot of---they picked up quite a number of bad people from the Mainland through the fingerprints, because they were all compared with Washington, and they were all handled. So I was assistant to the director at the Division of Registration for about a year and a half.

JR: And that was after Pearl Harbor?

VM: That was after Pearl Harbor. When Pearl Harbor came, the schools did not open then. Oh, Roosevelt was full of people that were put out of their buildings out in the army area. They moved them in. They moved the navy people in, away from the place that was being attacked. And so they had them living—they had temporary quarters for them in various places. Many people took them in their own homes. The Longs had, I think, three different units of people in their home that they took in. They had teachers then who were organized, so that the teachers went around—different ones were assigned different districts, and they went house to house and enumerated everybody who lived there. They found out who they were and what their background was and all about it. And then those people were sent down to get their fingerprints. Everybody was tabulated. And so I was with one group that went—at first we went around to the homes where people lived and who couldn't get out and go. And so I was

with that group. And then I went down to civilian defense and stayed there for about a year and a half doing fingerprinting.

JR: So after Pearl Harbor the schools were closed for a period?

VM: They were closed for a while. I don't know how long. It was about a month, I guess, or something like that. It could have been a little more. Then the schools opened. And, of course, they were glad to have me go somewhere else, I guess, because a lot of Roosevelt people left and went back to the Mainland. Many of them were military families.

JR: You mean a lot of the student body?

VM: The student body, a lot of them left. So we had teachers that did a lot of other things, that didn't go back to schoolteaching then, that were out doing other things. The thing had been set up ahead of time so that we'd continue to get our schoolteacher pay, though we were assigned to other jobs by the community. So I was still on the payroll, but I didn't get the—and when summer came and the teachers had vacation, we had to work because we didn't get off. That worked out for some time.

Then when we went back to school—you see, we used to have a lot of Filipinos [who] lived here and did work out in the fields, in the sugarcane fields and in the pineapple fields. And they were gone when the war started. We didn't have workers. So the schools, the high schools, were set up so that we took the kids out to help. And at Roosevelt, we would take them for five days in a row. At first they started five days in a week, and then they decided they'd better have Thursday and Friday and then have a little rest and then go back to Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, five days in a row. So I was back at Roosevelt then, and when it was our turn to go to the fields, we took the kids. We went out to the fields with them. The teachers went, too. And we'd ride in the bus with the kids—bus nothing, it was a truck. We'd ride out there, and when we'd come to one place, the man in charge would say, "I need six boys, please."

"Okay, here are your six boys."

Next one said, "We need ten." I'd give him them.

And after they were all scattered around in these different places, my job—I was in charge of all these kids, and I was to walk from one place to another where they were working to see that they were properly taken care of and that nobody was taking advantage of them, and that they had proper little restrooms set up for them and all the rest of it, that they had time off when they ate their lunch and so on like that. So we did that for a long time. And then we had some people in town who thought that was wonderful because we should be training our people to go back to the fields.

JR: The same people who wanted the quota probably.

VM: Yeah, we had some of them. At one time, I was on a committee. We were supposed to be working on public schools. I was from Roosevelt. I was the teacher from Roosevelt. They had another teacher from McKinley, and they had a principal from one of the elementary schools.

And then Harold Loper was in the superintendent's office at that time. The four of us were from the school department, and they had about—it must have been about eight or ten people from the community. And we were supposed to be working on plans for public education in Hawai'i. (Sighs) Those people that were there, they were people that mostly sent their own kids to private schools. And the first thing they wanted to do was to say there would be no foreign language taught in the public schools, no German, no French, no Latin or whatnot. I said, "But our boys are going on to study medicine, and they've got to have their Latin. We have to teach Latin."

And one of them said, "Miss McBride, if boys want to be doctors, they have no business going to Roosevelt High School. They should be in [private schools like] 'Iolani or Punahou, where they will be getting the college prep materials. And there's no reason why the public schools should be teaching college prep. They should go to the private schools for that." So they made many speeches.

JR: That didn't sit too well with you.

VM: It didn't sit too well with me anyway. I was a---oh dear, we had to fight for our public schools. And we fought very long and hard for them, too.

JR: May I just pause you for one second and stop the tape recorder.

VM: Yes.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 21-8-1-91; SIDE ONE

VM: They were going to need principals. We were getting a lot of new schools, and they needed principals. And they wanted me to be a principal. Well, I had to go back and take a lot of training to get in line for it. But that's when I went to be a principal.

JR: Did you want to be a principal or you felt that . . .

VM: I hadn't thought about it, but afterwards, sure, that's all right. Yes, it might be a good idea. I didn't want to be principal of a high school. I felt that boys that played football and were big husky boys should have a man in charge of them. I didn't think that that was a woman's job, particularly. But I knew some women that went into it for it. But people in the school department suggested that I get ready to be a principal because they needed principals. So I took some special courses at the university here. Then I went back to the Mainland one summer. I could get twelve weeks of summer school in Utah, and we could only get six weeks here. So I went back that one summer and took classes, very interesting ones.

JR: When did you become a principal?

VM: (Nineteen forty-nine.)

JR: So you remained at Roosevelt until you became a principal, was that the transition?

VM: Yes, yes. I was helping plan different courses of study up there for a while, toward the end of my stay there. But no, I went out for special training, and then I went out to be a principal. I went over to Moloka'i (in 1949).

JR: Did you particularly want to leave Honolulu?

VM: No, but in those days you had to start on the other islands, you couldn't start in Honolulu. So I went over to Moloka'i, and I expected to be over there for some time. But they wanted me to come back, so I came back. I was out at Pearl Harbor. I went to a junior high school, and I could see why. They had a lot of people that didn't want junior high, and they thought that since I had been in high school work I could (make changes). Brother, what a job they gave me. It was a big job, and they didn't have enough personnel to be any good. I was the principal, and I had one secretary, and that's all the overhead we had. We had the library, but we didn't have any librarian. And we had youngsters that needed counselors. We had lots of kids who had problems out there. We didn't have anybody to counsel them. And so I told them I would not stay at that school unless they made some changes. I didn't want to be there. So I said I would go back to teaching.

"No."

So then they decided I should go to another school. So I went to an elementary school at the military [base] up there. That was very good, but you see, when you're in a small school, you get small pay. And then you're supposed to go to a larger school and get more pay. And so you move pretty fast. So I was just at that school for one year, then they needed somebody to go to—that was an interesting school, too.

JR: Is that the military school?

AM: (No. It was on a military base, but was part of the DPI [Department of Public Instruction]—Hawai'i public school. I did not want it to be an) English standard school, because we had lots of military people. I said, "No. We can absorb—it's mostly military, and we can absorb a certain number of people in the neighborhood." So they gave us another street (in that district), so we had several local youngsters there. But we didn't need to do that [i.e., make the school English standard].

And then I stayed there. I didn't ask for a transfer, but they called me in one time and said they needed—the bigger schools needed some principals, and I was in line for one, so they suggested maybe I could go to Waikīkī School. So I went out to Waikīkī School. It was very interesting. And I stayed there until they found me across the ocean one (summer). I was at my sister-in-law's house when I got a call from Hawai'i. They said that some new principal had fallen off a cliff and killed himself, and there's one teacher at—out in the country here, that wanted to take that job and would I consider going out to (Koko Head). So I said, "Yes, if you want me to, I'll go."

I was at Koko Head [Elementary School] for four years. And then I had a secretary, a very nice little girl, but anyway, she got *hāpai*. I knew very well that you couldn't get a secretary

to come out there. It would've (been) a long time to find one that would come that far out. So I asked to transfer to town. The superintendent told me that they were having trouble up at Mānoa [Elementary] School—it was the biggest school in town, biggest elementary school—and would I consider going up there. "Yup." So I went up there, and stayed there until I retired.

JR: What was it like being a principal of an elementary school?

VM: Depended on which school you were in, I guess. It made a difference. I wouldn't have the job now. No, I wouldn't take it now.

JR: Why not?

VM: It was good then, because the principal (was) in charge of the school. And I thoroughly enjoyed it. I had some wonderful teachers there. When I went over. . . . When I was at Waikīkī School, we had an intern program there, and we had an intern supervisor and an assistant supervisor. And the assistant supervisor was a very nice gal. I liked her very much. I didn't care for the woman who was the supervisor. She was coast [i.e., Mainland] *Haole*, and she thought she knew all about everything. And she was not too well trained. She was hired at the university level. And so we had this intern program. And then this one gal, her husband was going back to Washington for something and she asked if she could have a leave of absence to go with him. And I said, "Well, why don't you ask for a leave of absence. You've been teaching long enough so you're entitled to a leave of absence. It pays a little bit of money."

So by the time she came back, I was at Koko Head. So she came out. "Could she come to Koko, too." We didn't have an intern program out there, but we put her in charge of something else. She stayed there until I was coming up to Mānoa [Elementary] School, then she wanted to come up there. So she was with me at three different schools. She's a very nice person. Oh, I thought it was very good. I enjoyed it.

We were beginning to have a few teachers that belonged to the union. Once in a while we got a union teacher who's a good teacher, but mostly they were people that used their membership to hold their job rather than really being able to do anything, at least that's the way it seemed to me.

JR: Did you find teaching more rewarding [or] as rewarding [as] being a principal?

VM: They were different. They were different, and I enjoyed both of them. But they were different. But when I was a teacher, we didn't go home when the bell rang. We had after-school programs. We organized kids into clubs. We chaperoned their dances, and we chaperoned their picnics. So that the kids that we had when I was teaching—and then you had a homeroom class, too. And the kids decide what they wanted to study in homeroom. It wasn't part of the regular program. And I remember one class we had, the kids wanted to study etiquette. All right, we studied etiquette. And they had different things they wanted to do, activities. And of course, that wouldn't go with the teachers that belonged to the union because they all go home when the bell rings now. And so the teachers don't have the closeness that they used to have with the students. It's just a different thing.

And when we were there, the principal and the teachers all belonged to the same group. They worked together. And then when the union came in, they cut it off. These are the teachers and those are the principals, and there's a great rift between them. And that's not good for the schools, as I see it. They really should have a unified approach between all the people that work with the children in the school, rather than having some against others.

When I was out on one exchange in California, we had union men there in charge of some things, and—not the principal—if they didn't like the orders of the principal, they would give each other a high sign and do what they wanted. And it was---well, it rather undermined the school in some ways. Maybe I told you—I had one friend here, [and] after I retired, she was principal of a school here. And the unions by then had taken over the schools. And she was called down to the office one day. And they asked what she considered her responsibility in the school, what she really thought her job was, the biggest job. And she explained that her biggest job was curriculum, to make sure that the curriculum advanced from term to term to term like this, without any interruption, to make sure that they progressed. And so she was told then, "The teachers don't want you to do that anymore. The teachers will handle the curriculum, and you stay in the office and run the office, the business affairs in the office, rather than trying to dictate the curriculum, because the teachers are trained teachers and they'll take care of that."

So she said, "I will resign on the spot." So she resigned. It makes a difference.

JR: Did you see yourself as the general of the school when you were the principal, that kind of a role?

VM: I don't think I saw myself as a dictator as such, but it was up to me to make sure that the school moved ahead slowly. For instance, I went into one school, as a new one [i.e., principal], and they had money to buy textbooks, and they had not spent it. They had money available, and my first thought was we're going to buy a lot of new books. And one teacher came to me and said, "Miss McBride, I ordered this particular set of books for my class, and I want to keep that set of books, and I don't want anybody else to have that kind of books for their class. This is for my class."

I said, "But those are fourth-grade books and you are teaching the sixth grade."

She said, "I know it, but my children like these books. They can read them, and they are interested, and it's fun to have them. And they want these books."

I said, "But they are not progressing. They are using this for entertainment instead of progress. You have the sixth grade, and your children are able to handle sixth-grade readers as part of their education. And if you want to use this set of books, I will transfer you to a fourth grade where you will have fourth-grade children reading fourth-grade books." She was very angry with me, but I insisted on staying with it.

They had a thing on TV the other night where the people were phoning in. They had teachers there that were talking, and I was listening and thinking that's all right. But they wanted people to phone in questions, so I phoned in a question. I said, "I want to know who's in charge of curriculum." Nobody answered that question. If the teacher just figures that she's

entertaining the kids during the time she has them, that is not progress, as I see it. Of course, I'm out of style now. And they can do whatever they please, and it doesn't make any difference to me.

JR: Did you notice any changes during your time as a teacher?

VM: Oh, well sure. I knew which teachers joined the union because they were. . . . The first time I had a faculty meeting at Mānoa School—we had some teachers up there who had joined the union. I didn't know it at the time. It was a large school. It was the biggest one in town. I was a little flattered that somebody had put me there. But the superintendent said, "They've got problems there, and I want you to straighten them out."

Well, I went up there. And I organized my first faculty meeting before school started. I don't remember what we were talking about, but in the midst of nothing, one teacher jumped to her feet and yelled, "I'm not afraid of you!"

I said, "Well, I hope not." I didn't want anybody to be afraid of me.

And somebody stood up and said, "You can't make us do this!"

And somebody else said, "Let's have it understood, there's no hospitality committee in this school. We're not going to have a hospitality committee."

What do you do with a group of people like that? I said, "We'll talk about it later."

JR: What did you do?

VM: I called in some of the teachers, and I wanted to know why they don't want a hospitality committee. They had collected money from everyone for a hospitality committee, and then they would send flowers to anybody that got sick or whatnot. And then they would use money to put on a luncheon or something. And some of the ones that (belonged) to the union didn't want to stay for the luncheon, and they felt they had paid for it and they didn't want to pay for it. So we will not have a hospitality committee because it cost too much money. So very well, we didn't have a hospitality committee like that. We didn't ask for money to come in, but we carried on in some ways.

I don't know. Some people. . . . We did have some problems. We had one teacher, she belonged to the union. I had a vice principal at that time, and some of them went out of their way to contradict anything he said. And anyway, I had to stand by and say, "No, no. You have to follow the rules."

(One of our union teachers decided she would rather work for her former principal, who by this time was administering a rural school. She made her application, but the announcement later named one of our interns as the employee. I phoned him and reminded him that one of his local teachers had applied and been overlooked. He called me and said), "I purposely didn't put her in because I understand she belongs to the union." He said, "You tell her that if she gets out of the union, I will hire her. But if she's in the union, I won't have her."

I said, "That's not my business." I said, "If you feel that way about it, you tell her that. But I will not tell her that. A teacher has a right to join the union if she wants to. And I won't be a part of that." So she did not get the job. And I went out of my way to tell her she was welcome to stay where she was. But I think she---I see her now sometimes. We speak to each other, but there's never anything cordial there. And I feel in my bones that she felt that I blocked her getting that job, when I didn't. I did my best to help.

JR: What was your position in relation to the teachers and the Department of Education? As a principal, where did you fit in? Were you right in the middle?

VM: Well, I guess so. If I was a principal, I was in charge of the group, wasn't I? And I don't think that I was obnoxious to them. We had some people that had to be put down a little bit, shall we say? For instance, we were getting new books. And the teachers who had the top classes came right in to tell me, "We always give the new books to the top classes. If we have the top class, we get the new books. And then the books that we have used are put down to the lower groups."

And I said, "I don't know that that is the best way." And I'd called in a teacher who had some slower children and was really struggling with them. It's harder to teach slower youngsters. And I asked her, I said, "Do you want new books?"

"Oh, Miss McBride, is there a chance I could get new books?"

And I said, "Well, yes. We have money to buy new books, and I'm going to give you a chance to order your books first."

"Oh," she said, "this is wonderful!"

And the people that had the top groups said, "Well why should she get new books? She doesn't even have a top class."

I said, "Then that's the reason. She needs them more than anybody else, since she has slow children." So I don't know. I've tried to be fair with them, but I don't know. Maybe I was, maybe I wasn't.

JR: Were there times when it was hard to get things like new books and supplies and whatnot for the schools?

VM: Well, we had money allotted to us, and it seemed to me that we had enough for purposes. For instance, we had some old, shall I say, maps, sixth-grade maps. And I called the teachers in. "We've got money here. We can buy some of these new ones."

And one of the teachers said, "We like the ones we've got. We don't need them."

"Okay." I ordered two or three new ones, and I had them in the library when people came in for a faculty meeting. And somebody said, "Oh boy, look at the new maps. Who gets those? We would like these."

I said, "Do you want them? We'll see if we can get them for you."

And the people who had the old ones didn't want them [i.e., the newer maps], because they said, "We know how to use the old ones, and we don't want them."

I found one teacher who had a third grade, and she had ordered, the year before I came there, a map that was designed for a sixth grade. She had it in her room. She never sent it back to the supply office or anyplace else. And I discovered she had this map there, this thing that wasn't designed for third grade at all, it was designed for older children. And I told her that I felt that should be in the sixth grade. She said, "But I bought it for my class."

And I said, "I know, but it's not proper for your class. If you want that map, then I should put you in another group." Well, she didn't like that very well, but at least we approached it from that angle. I told her we'd get her a map that was suitable for her children. But she liked to tell the parents that her kids were so good they were using the sixth-grade materials. Well, it's just icky, icky stuff along the way.

JR: You mentioned the incident where Oren Long talked to you about your vocal attitude at some of the rallies.

VM: Yes.

JR: What else do you remember of Oren Long?

VM: Oh, I remember Oren Long and his wife very well. They're some of the best friends I ever had. They lived up here just around the corner, not very far from here. And they became very close friends of mine. I don't know. We just went---we just belong to the same social group. We know each other very well. And even after he died, his wife was down at Arcadia [Retirement Residence] for a time, but she's gone now. But no, they were very wonderful people.

JR: What kind of an effect do you think he had on education in Hawai'i?

VM: Oren Long? I think he's a good one. He was good. He was rather mild in his manner, but I think he was a good leader. I think we had some excellent leaders here. We had a variety of people. They were different kinds of people, but they were good. A man recently died who was in our schools who was very good, Charlie Clark. He was a very wonderful person. Now, he was much younger than I. When I left Pearl Harbor Intermediate, he took over, he took that job there. And he was a good man. I liked Charlie Clark very much. But then he left the school department and went to do other things and eventually went back. But he was a big asset in the school department, I felt. But he's gone now, too.

JR: Are there any other people that come to mind that really made a mark on education here?

VM: There are so many of them, but they're not living anymore. As I told you, when I went—Clyde Crawford was the (first) principal up at (Roosevelt) when I first went up there. He was very good. We used to call him Christian Endeavor Crawford—C. E. Crawford. Yes, he was very good. One just died down at Arcadia the other day, he was a deputy

superintendent. He was very good. And of course, Tom Vance was excellent. And then---mmm, the one up at Roosevelt for so many years. Of course, there were many people that didn't like him and—why can't I say his name. I'll say it in a minute. (Chuckles)

JR: Was that the Tom you were mentioning earlier?

VM: No, that's Tom Vance. He was at Kalākaua Intermediate. He was a very good man, and he went up to Farrington High School eventually. And then he left the school department and was in charge of the prison over on the Big Island at one time. He did lots of stuff there.

I was trying to say Bob Spencer, who was up at Roosevelt when I was there. He was a controversial type, shall I say. (Chuckles) He was a good man, but he was determined to build a good football team. The football team was more important to him than anything else, I guess. And he let in some people whose English wasn't quite what it should be. One of my friends was assigned to test some kid that came up. He was a good football player. And he [i.e., Spencer] brought her in, and he said, "Now, you're to pass this kid."

"Very well."

She gave him the test. He hesitated to speak English at all, because he was a better football player than he was a talker, but she wrote on it, "Passed at the request of the principal." He was furious! I tell you, she lost her job at the end of the year. He had her transferred to some other school.

So then I knew him very well. I knew him and his wife, and we'd been very close together. So I was out at their house one day, socially, I guess, at least not school, and he said to me, "If I ask you to pass a kid for the football team, would you pass him?"

I said, "If he spoke English I would."

"What if he didn't speak English?"

I said, "Then I suggest you send him to somebody else who would pass him, because if he doesn't speak English, I'm not going to pass him, even at your request."

He was a very good man. I knew him very well. He was quite a guy. Many people thought he was no good. (Chuckles)

One time they were going to change the school colors [at Roosevelt High School]. Our people had had green and gold, as I told you. But a little school out in the country had green and gold, and they told us we had to have some new colors. Well, Bob Spencer figured that black and white would be tremendous. Nobody ever had black and white. That would stand out everywhere. And he was going to have all the kids lined up in—he was going to have the girls' drill team all in black and white. "That would really be a terrific thing." So he announced that our new colors are black and white. Of course, it made the kids mad as hell. They didn't want it. They would not have black and white. They all wanted something else. So Bob called me into the office, and he said, "I'm now putting you in charge. I want you to take over and pick out the colors for this school."

Well, what do you do then? What do you do? You work with all the kids. And you've got kids at this end—anyway, I called in the groups, and I said, "You have an idea of what you want? Okay, you make it. Everybody's going to use the same size form, and you make a block *R* for Roosevelt. And you put in the colors you want. And you do it for the colors you want, and you do it for yours. And we'll get the whole. . . . " And so we had a whole bulletin board covered with block *R*s, like this, all colors. Fine. "Then we're going to have a vote, and we're going to vote on them. And we're going to take the three top ones, and then we'll have another vote on those." So that's the way we did it. By the time you get through, you see, nobody had any complaint. Well, of course they picked red and gold. And you see, those colors should have been Kam School. Those are the Hawaiian colors, the colors that were in the old Hawaiian capes and everything else. But Kam School had not taken them, and so Roosevelt got the red and gold. That was fine. Everybody was happy.

JR: In your opinion, what makes a good principal? What does it take to be a good principal?

VM: You have to have somebody who gets ideas across and at the same time gets the support of the people that you're working with. And if you can't figure out how to get the people with you, then maybe you're in trouble.

As I said, the time I was up at Mānoa [Elementary] School, we had a few people up there that belonged to the union. And they were determined to be against anything that anybody else said. Well, they had a right to join the union. And I was not objecting to their belonging to the union, but sometimes I felt they didn't cooperate as well as they might have. Then you have some that would sneak out and go home the minute the bell rang, even though kids wanted to come afterwards.

At one time we had a parent who was unhappy about what was going on in the classroom or something. And the teacher told me that, and I said, "Well, why don't you arrange to have the parent come in for a conference, and we'll work it out together." Very well, she would.

So then she came back and told me that the father is going to be here at such-and-such a time, on such-and-such a day, for the conference. "And I told him you would be there."

I said, "Yes, I will be there."

"But I won't be there because I have another engagement that day, so you and the father will have the conference."

I said, "But this conference has to include the teacher. There's no use of my meeting with the father and we talk it over, and the teacher and the child are not in on it at all. The father and I might decide what we want, but you're going to have to be in on it, too."

Well, she was a bit annoyed. She didn't want to come to the conference. And I said, "Well, if you don't come to the conference, we won't have a conference, that's all. But I think we should have a conference at a time when you can come."

So we finally worked it out. She was not too happy about it, but at least she finally gave in. But I had some that didn't give in at all and—well, you have to get along with them, as such.

But I felt, if I had children under a teacher that I felt was more concerned about her own job than about the children, and more concerned about herself, the least I could do was to make sure that the children had a different teacher next year. It worked out. You have to make some concession. Remember, they had the right to join the union if they want, even though I might think it's not always the best thing.

JR: What was your relationship with parents like during your career?

VM: Oh, I had all different kinds of relationships. Different parents had different relationships. And it was really a little bit interesting. (Chuckles) Oh dear, we had a lot of—I could write books on how do you get along with the parents.

The kids had to do some clean up after school. We had limited work to clean up, and so youngsters used to sweep their rooms after they got through school. And we'd have somebody be the monitor this week, and somebody this week, and somebody this week. And they'd sweep up the rooms, and then they'd go home. The teacher had to organize it so they would only be there for a few minutes. They couldn't be there very long. We had one little boy who made it a point, he was not going to be there. He would run around frantically and not get his work done. He used to ride home with somebody else, and they had to go home. And he didn't do it. So anyway I called him in, and I told (chuckles) the child he was going to have to do his work after school. And I said, "If you don't do it—you have time, the teacher gives you time, and if you don't do it, then when it's time to go home, you can't go home."

"Oh, but I have to have a ride."

"All right, you have to have a ride." Well anyway, I said, "But you have to get the work done so that you can have a ride."

Well, I called the parents and told them that, and so they understood what it was all about. And it worked out. The kid had to get busy doing his work. We had different things, but I think we, for the most part, came along pretty well.

JR: Were they generally supportive of what you, either as a teacher or principal, were trying to do?

VM: I think so. I think so. I think, as a whole, teachers liked me as a principal. Well, I had a few maybe that didn't, but most of them did.

We had one case when I was up at Mānoa. And we had a teacher [named Martha] that had been with me out at Koko Head, and she wanted to come up to Mānoa, too. So she applied for the job, and then she came up one day we were having a holiday time then—she came up and told me, "Oh, I got my contract. It came through, so I'm going to be here!"

"Good, fine, I'm glad. I'd like to have you here."

Well, then it was about the next day or so I got a call from the personnel office down here, and he said, "I'm going to have recall that contract because the union insists that I put a union teacher in that job."

And I said, "But is the union teacher qualified ahead of my teacher?"

He said, "Well, that isn't quite the point."

I said, "This teacher's had this much experience, and I think she's ahead of the—if the union person is young, she hasn't got through this yet."

"Well, no. I don't know, but we have to play along with the union, so I have to recall this contract."

I said, "The contract is legal."

He says, "I know it is, but I'm going to recall it."

I said, "Okay, goodbye."

I had had his kid in school, too. We knew each other pretty well. I rang the phone and got Martha on the phone. I said, "Have you got the contract in your hand?"

She said, "Yes, I've got it here."

I said, "Fine. I'll be in school the next ten minutes. I want that contract down here, right now. I want to see that contract. I want you to bring it down to me right now."

"Right now?"

"Yes," I said, "I want it right now."

So she came down and brought the contract and said, "Here's the contract."

I said, "Fine, thank you. If anybody asks you for it, I've got it."

And she said, "What's this about?"

I said, "Well, somebody's decided they're going to give this job to somebody else. But you've got a legal contract. And if anybody asks you for this contract, you just say Miss McBride is holding it, and I'll carry on from there. This is a legal contract."

"Oh," she said, "I can't fight, Miss McBride. I'm no good at fighting.

I said, "You don't have to fight. I'm going to fight for you."

So she went on her way. And I rang this personnel man, and I said, "I have the contract in my hand. And I am holding it, and it is legal. And I'm going to scrap for it because it's a legal contract, and you're not going to call it in."

"Oh," he said, "you make trouble for me."

I said, "Well, you make trouble for me, too. This time I'm keeping the contract, so you just tell the union that it's out of luck."

"Oh dear. Okay."

Well, then in the next day or two a teacher came by and said, "Oh, Miss McBride, I can't start school in the fall, I'm *hāpai*. I'm going to have maternity leave, and so you have to find a substitute."

So I called the personnel man, and I said, "All right, I made trouble for you. I give you chance now. I've got somebody going out on maternity leave, and you may put your gal up here temporarily. It's just a substitute job for one year, but she may come and I will—if you want to give her a contract, that's fine. I'll accept it."

"Huh," he said, "well, you get me off the hook, don't you."

I said, "Well, I'm trying to. But this is not a legal one, you know, it's only a substitute. And she will be substituting, and she'll have to make good or she won't get a job permanently. And it's not a permanent job, it's just a temporary one, but it gives us chance to see how well she can do."

"Well, all right."

When we started school---I knew they wanted them [i.e., union teachers] because we had intern teachers, and they liked to have a union person get hold of the intern teachers before they had time to make up their mind much about anything. So that year we had our faculty meeting, and then we had another meeting for new members, all the ones that were going to be interns and two or three new ones that had been placed there. And so I told them---the principal who'd had that gal before told me, she said, "You don't know what you're getting. She's terrible. You'll never know where she is. She's out of her room nearly all the time. She goes around and tries to sign up people for the union during school hours. And you will never know where she is."

"Thank you."

Then I told this group I had afterwards, I said, "There's one rule in this school, you do not leave your classroom unless Miss McBride knows where you are and she says it's okay for you to be out of there. Otherwise, you are responsible to be in your classroom at all times."

I was faking it for this one [particular teacher], you see, but making it look like this [was for all of the teachers]. And so anyway, everybody felt that was a good idea. And so, fine. They started school and everything was going along smoothly. It was a huge school. And then I was at a principal's meeting. When I came back, all hell had busted loose. It seemed that this class—this was a fourth-grade class—they were on their way back from the cafeteria—teachers took kids to the cafeteria in the elementary schools—and on the way back, the teacher stopped at the restroom for a minute, and the kids went back to their classroom. And the kid sitting behind---one little boy was sitting in front, one behind, and the one behind got a pencil, a well-sharpened pencil, and he held it out like this [i.e., pointed upwards], so that when the

kid sat down, he sat on the sharpened pencil. And it tore his scrotum, and he was bleeding like anything, and the kids were screaming. And I was away, but the vice principal was there. And they rushed down to get Mr. [A. Ray] Blue, the vice principal. Well, he saw the thing, and he quickly called up the family doctor—we had all that on file in the office. He tried to call home, and they couldn't get anybody. There was nobody there. So he called the doctor and said, "Jimmy Jones is injured, and I can't reach his parents, but you're the family doctor. Can you do anything?"

He says, "Well, if you bring him down right now I'll take care of him."

So the vice principal put him in his car—that was contrary to rules, too—and took him down to the doctor. And the doctor took the kid.

Well anyway, the teacher came back from—caught up with her class, and she went in. And the kids were all, "Oooh, oooh, oooh!" And blood on the floor.

She went tearing down to the vice principal's office, and he had just got back from the doctor. "What about it? What? Is he hurt?"

And Mr Blue said, "Well, there are his trunks there. You can see they're all covered with blood."

And so anyway, I came back from my principal's meeting, and the teacher came running in. She was all in a dither. "Miss McBride, I didn't leave my classroom, I merely stopped at the john a minute. I just stopped a minute, Miss McBride."

I said, "All right, I think you did the right thing. I'm not blaming you. It was quite all right. And we'll see how it comes out. Mr. Blue has handled it, and those accidents will happen. And we will scold the child responsible, but I'm not holding you responsible."

"Oh, thank goodness," she said.

Okay, so we got that one straightened out. Then, it was a week or two later, she had her kids out playing down at the baseball field. We had a big place down there. And we had a new kid from the Mainland who was wearing shoes—most of the kids were barefooted. But he jumped up on the side of the wall somewhere, and he slipped and fell and twisted his leg. I don't know what. He was screaming. He couldn't walk, he couldn't get up. We had a good custodian there. "Oh, can you carry him up?"

So they went down and carried him back up. And he was screaming with pain, and the teacher came to me, "Miss McBride, what did I do? He just jumped up on the side of the wall there, and he fell down. And I couldn't stop him."

I said, "I'm not blaming you. We handled it all right. Well, you were not at fault. You did what you were supposed to do, and so I'm on your side."

She's a union teacher. After that, boy, she was my teacher! But we had those two incidents, and so we get along. But you have all kinds of people on the staff.

JR: What kind of a teacher were you? Were you a strict teacher?

VM: Yes, very strict. I was a very strict teacher.

JR: (Laughs) I had that feeling.

VM: Yes, of course I was a strict teacher. If you're strict, then you get control of them. And if you're not strict. . . . But I think the kids all liked me. I showed you what [former student] Kentaru [Tsutsumi] said in there [i.e., in a letter to McBride].

JR: Yeah, I was going to ask you about some of your memorable students.

VM: Well, you see that yearbook, they dedicated it to me. Now, they don't do that if they don't like you pretty well. That's when I was at Roosevelt, you see. I wasn't the boss then, I was just one of the teachers. Some liked me, maybe some didn't, but that was all right. (Chuckles)

JR: What year did you retire?

VM: Nineteen sixty-five.

JR; Were you sorry when it came time to retire? Would you have liked to continue?

VM: I would have continued if things had been different. But we got some new approaches then. I was up at Mānoa [Elementary] School. It was a very large school. And we had had a man who was in charge of bringing (tape inaudible), assigning schools and the background and so on. But he had left. And they started telling principals what their jobs were. And there was a lot of building going on up in Mānoa. And they told me that it was my job to check on all the building that was going up in the area and find out how large the houses were that were being putting up there, how many bedrooms they had, so that I could make an estimate as to how many children would be coming and how much the enrollment would be increased because of this thing. Well, I had to run the school. I wasn't going around and get hold of the architect and find out how many kids were going to live in which house that was being built. Not only that, but some of the houses were just new houses built for other people that were already in our area.

And they began telling us all kinds of things they expected the principal to do that had nothing to do with the school situation that I could see. They were making me take over some jobs that they had had other people doing. And it sounded as though it was getting a little bit thick. And I had already been in school long enough to retire. I'd reached the age of retirement. And some people in our school system had said they should retire when they could, so the others could get a promotion right fast or something. I don't know what.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JR: So you retired in 1965?

VM: Mm hmm.

JR: What have you done to keep yourself busy?

VM: Oh, I take care of my dogs and cats. I bought this house. That was a job, too. When I bought it they told me that the house was worth zero-zero-zero. Of course, it's had a lot of repair work done to it [since] then. I like the house, but I'm a lazy old woman. I move around too slowly. I don't get things done that I plan to do. I used to be able to do this and this and this and this. Now, I go (slowly), this and this and this. And everything's a mess. That's all right, too. So I'm just going to stay right here and see my dogs and cats.

JR: Is education in Hawai'i different from education on the Mainland?

VM: I think education in Hawai'i is different from what it is anywhere else. (Chuckles) No, I don't know. Of course, it's one system over the entire state here. That was different from the counties at other places. But people---if you wanted to send your child to school in a different district, we used to have a district exception you could ask for and probably get permission to send people wherever you wanted to. They talk now that parents should have a choice as to where they send their children. Well, I don't know why they make such a big thing of it. We used to be able to handle it. If we had a problem, you could. . . .

When I was out at Fort Shafter, for instance, the army had a woman that was working in one of the offices there—I don't remember what she did with the office—but she lived out on the other side of the island. And she wanted to bring her little boy in to go to a school [in the Fort Shafter area], so he'd be near where she worked, and she could take him home afterwards. So, fine. The little boy came, and that's good, I put him in school. Well anyway, we had trouble. (Chuckles) Well, these were army children. They were all army kids. Well, this little kid was a local kid. He came in, he went into the classroom, and got along all right, but as soon as they turned him out for recess, he begins screeching pidgin English at them and yelling and hollering. And they didn't know what he was talking about. And he was yelling and saying something, and they just looked at him, the kids looked at him. And it made him mad, so he was going around and punching all the kids. And so they called him in, the kids brought him in.

He says, "Oh," he said, "they just stand and look at you."

So I had to call his mother in, and she had to explain to him that they didn't know his English and that he had to learn their English. It worked out all right, but he was in an awful time for a while. So that did work out.

I'm not sorry I went into teaching. I think I did a good job. I don't think I'd go into teaching now, though. Because the teachers would go home when the bell rang, and they would. . . . Well, the curriculum is the important thing, as I see it. It must be built step by step by step.

There was one teacher on the [television] program the other night when they were talking about it, and she was explaining that she didn't care about the women in the history book they

had. She wanted to know more about the women of Hawai'i. And so in her class she didn't bother to teach them about these famous women, but she taught them to learn all about the women in Hawai'i. Well now, that's all right, but next year when they go on, they will not have had the background they need for next year's work. And if she had handled it by using the material for the local ones in addition to [the more traditional materials], then it would have been just fine. But for her to skip and push out the things she doesn't like to make room for the things she does like is upsetting the curriculum. And the children who miss out on that may be in big trouble later on. It's a problem.

JR: I know you've been out of education here for a number of years.

VM: Yes, out of education, and out of touch, too (laughs).

JR: But I want to ask this question anyway, because you seem to have some strong . . .

VM: Oh, I do I have strong opinions, whether they're any good or not.

JR: If I were to say that tomorrow you could be the superintendent if you wanted to be, given that opportunity, what would you do?

VM: I would say, "Well, let's see, who is it that can remove the last twenty years of my age and make me young enough to handle it." (Chuckles) I don't think I would want to be superintendent. But do you know [businessman] Lex Brodie? Do you know what he's been doing in the schools?

JR: What has he been doing?

VM: Lex Brodie is one of my pupils. He's a wonderful guy in many ways, but he has decided that the schools—he's concerned about the buildings particularly, and what happens to the school grounds. And he has been doing his work. He started on his own pretty much. He heads this small-business group in Hawai'i [Small Business Hawai'i]. And he took me with him to see one or two schools, particularly up to Roosevelt and so on. The teachers work for an increase in their salaries, but they have not been doing anything to improve their buildings. And some of the buildings have been in a pretty bad shape, pretty bad. And he has organized a group, so he's been going around to one place and another to figure out what has to be done. And they're making some headway. I've been in touch with him a good deal. But he can go get younger people to help him now in that.

But, for instance, up at Roosevelt—that was the school where we worked on—they decided they needed to paint that stadium. So he got a bunch of people, mostly the parents or people that used to go to Roosevelt or whatnot, to buy paint. And they started repainting that stadium. But they wondered why there was not a single member of the school faculty that came out there to help or be there or encourage them or to be part of the program. The teachers all quit, you see. It was not a union job. And they felt they were getting no cooperation and that the teachers didn't really care. Well, maybe they didn't care. I don't know. But I know there was fussing about it, and whether they ever got the stadium finished or not, I don't know.

But it's a little bit like the professionals [i.e., politicians] that we send back to Washington. We need money for lots of things, but they use deficit spending for everything, except they increase their own salary. And their own salaries come pouring in. They're all getting rich. And they're not going to quit normal time, they're going to stay on as long as they live, as I see it. And so the professional politician is a nuisance. But if I don't vote for them, I'll have to vote for some other professional politician. They're all that way now. (Chuckles)

JR: When you were teaching, how many hours a day would you put into your job, between homework and class time?

VM: Well, I used to put in an awful lot, because I taught English, and you don't learn English if the teacher doesn't correct your papers. I did make a deal with some of my kids once, though. Correcting papers is a big job, and they can't correct each others papers and do a job of it. But I finally got that trick. "Well, kids, I'm slow in getting your papers corrected. I'm doing a good job, but it takes me a while. But at least I won't make you another assignment until I get them through. So you won't have to write another one until you get this one back." That usually satisfies them.

I put in lots of hours, many hours. You can't teach English without bringing it home. (Coughs)

JR: Did you want to get a drink?

VM: Well, I think I have been talking too much!

JR: Well, I think we're through, basically.

VM: I think we're through, too.

JR: Yeah. Well, it's been nice talking to you.

VM: Well, I don't know. You've been very patient to listen to an old woman ramble on.

JR: (Laughs) I think a lot of people would like to hear you.

VM: Well, I don't know. I see my kids, and I'm very pleased with kids I used to teach. Of course, they have grandchildren now, but that's all right. My mother said there are only two ages of women, old married ones and young single ones. (Chuckles)

JR: And what are you?

VM: I'm young single! (JR laughs.) Sure!

JR: Well, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

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